

THE FORMATION OF GOAN OVERSEAS ASSOCIATION (NSW)

By John Mascarenhas *

1997 marks the 20th anniversary of our Association and it is a time to reflect on the history of the Association.

The beginning of our Association dates back to 1977. It was the year when it all started and the person to whom I credit for getting it all started is Alvito Coutinho. Alvito, who is now based in Melbourne, was recently in Sydney for our anniversary dance in May this year and whilst here I caught up with him for an interview about our Association. What follows is that interview -

John: Welcome back to Sydney to your familiar grounds. Could you explain how it all started?

Alvito: A group of Goans were at my house for my daughter's birthday party in October 1976. We decided rather as a challenge to organise a Christmas dance. This was a bold move not knowing whether our efforts would pay off. Soon we managed to organise a committee that took responsibility for the dance. The committee comprised of:-

1. Gwen de Souza
2. Joe de Souza
3. Elvira Fernandes
4. Lawrence Fernandes
5. Tony Fernandes
6. Alvito Peres Da Costa
7. John Sequeira
8. Carol Coutinho and
9. Alvito Coutinho

John: Are they then our "founder members"?

Alvito: Yes.

John: Founder members we are all proud of you. Then what happened?

Alvito: It was through a letter to all Goans, by word of mouth and through contacts we already knew, that we discovered a sizeable number of Goans who wanted to attend the dance.

John: Yes I remember the letter to all Goans and is reproduced as "EXHIBIT 1". Then what happened?

Alvito: We had a full house. The occasion catered for adults and children. The children had a special treat with Father Christmas complete with presents. It was at this dance that many of us were able to meet each other after many years.

John: I was at the dance and it was a well organised and memorable one and I must say I felt very emotional meeting everybody. I made new friends, and those friendships have gone from strength to strength. I must ask here for the benefit of our members what profit did you make at the dance?

Alvito: The dance produced a good result. It showed a profit of \$86.95. It was the first time the Goan community had a get together.

John: I received a copy from you detailing the profit made and is reproduced as "EXHIBIT 2". Then what happened?

Alvito: It was not long afterwards that one of the committee members John Sequeira was of the view that there was enough support to form a formal Association. A move in that direction was seen as opportune. A committee comprising the original group decided to call a meeting of all Goans with a view to considering the formation of our association which could cater for the social activities of the Goans.

As convener of the meeting I sent out notices to all known Goans including those who did not attend the original dance.

John: Yes I received the notice and I felt good about it and is reproduced as "EXHIBIT 3". Then what happened?

Alvito: The meeting was well attended. It was resolved to form the Association, related issues were trashed out such as registration, membership, policy matters etc. A lively debate followed, ending with the election of the first committee that laid the foundation of the Goan Overseas Association (New South Wales).

John: Oh what a feeling. Who paid for all the expenses incurred in holding the memorable meeting? I know you were elected the first General Secretary of our Association - what was your first task?

Alvito: The profit of \$86.95 that was made at our first dance was all expensed against this meeting with committee members making up any short fall. My first task was to register the Association, advise the government bodies of our formation, etc and as General Secretary it fell on me to notify the members of the first office bearers. I wrote to all members notifying them that the Association has been formed and stating the office bearers.

John: Well done. I received your letter and is reproduced as "EXHIBIT 4", stating our first office bearers. How has the Association progressed since 1977? What was the highlight of the Association as you see it?

Alvito: The highlight was of course the formation of the Association. What struck me most was the excitement and enthusiasm shown by those attending this inaugural meeting. Besides being keen their input was important - they spoke without inhibition and everyone had something to say. This certainly had a bearing on the shape the Association took. I think the Association since 1977 has done remarkably well. We had our teething problems in the first few years as is always the case.

John: Thank you Alvito - it has been a pleasure talking to you and I appreciate the time you have given me. I know the Association means a lot to you just as it means a lot to me and our members. May I on behalf of the Association thank you and the founder members for the work you all did and for the time you all gave out of your lives so that others may benefit from your efforts. I will remember you as the "Father" of our Association. Goodbye Alvito and thanks for the memories, until we meet again - final word from you Alvito.

Alvito: I must pay tribute to subsequent committees of the Association for keeping the momentum going and building on the past. Their contribution has to be acknowledged for making the Association what it is today.

END OF INTERVIEW

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We now see the start of our Association and the 1st newsletter is published in August 1977 which is reproduced as "EXHIBIT 5".

In preparing this article I spoke to ALL our founder members and ALL our Presidents to confirm the founder members and the committee members. It is possible inspite of careful attention that names could be left out, if this is the case it is not intentional. I would appreciate calls from the members concerned whose names have been left out to contact me before the end of 1997 so that the list can be finalised and held as historical records.

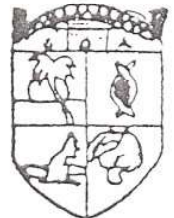
I sincerely hope future Presidents will in the course of their term publish at least once during their term all the names of the founder members as a tribute to them. I also hope future committees will in some way do something as a tribute to them. Some years ago I had suggested that they be made life members, but this was rejected. Now may be the right time to reconsider the suggestion.

In the course of preparing this history I had to read the minutes etc which was exciting but at the same time sad to read the names of past committee members who are no longer with us and who contributed so much to our Association. I knew them all. It was again very trying to read about other committee members losing their spouses, children, relatives and their loved ones, and members losing their loved ones. Our thoughts are with you all as we remember them.

I would like to place on record my deep appreciation to all the founder members and all our Presidents for all the help given in preparing this article.

On behalf of the Association I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the founder members, all our Presidents and their committees for all the time they have given to make this Association what it is today. I salute you all.

Finally a point of interest to our members, the Association in 1980 organised a logo competition for us and at the Annual General Meeting on 8 June 1980 all logos were exhibited and a vote was taken in each case. The competition was won by Carl Pereira who was still at school at the time. Well done Carl I remember it well and the logo now appears on all the Association's stationery etc.



What follows are comparative financial figures and our committees since the formation of our Association. I sincerely hope I have been able to give you a history of our Association.

* John Mascarenhas was the first auditor of the Association and has been the auditor for a total of 8 years and Treasurer for 2 years.



TO ALL GOANS

EXHIBIT 1

This open letter is to notify you that a function for all Goans and their guests is to be held on Boxing Day, that is, 26th December, 1976 at Vic Peter's Memorial Hall, 15 Riverview Road, Earlwood, commencing 7 p.m.

The organisers hope that as many Goans as there are in Sydney will attend this X'Mas function which will provide entertainment, eats and refreshments for all. Father Christmas will provide fun and gifts for children followed by dancing thru' the night.

We hope this occasion will bring together many of us who have known each other either in East Africa, London or elsewhere and do not miss out of their presence here. It should also serve to make new acquaintances.

As the hall can only hold to a maximum of 1000 people it would be appreciated if you do let us know of your intention to attend.

We would mention, however, this is not a profit making function. The entrance fee is \$10.00 per head (children free). Eats and ^{soft} drinks will be provided free of charge. Gifts will be given to children and for this reason advance bookings must be made giving their names and ages not later than 6th December, 1976. B.Y.O.G.

For further information and bookings please contact Mr. Coutinho, telephone 595 047.

We wish you MERRY CHRISTMAS 1976

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT
ON DANCE HELD 26.12.1976

EXHIBIT 2

<u>Payments</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>\$</u>
Hire of Hall	70.00	Gate Receipts	1,020.00
" " Music	116.00	Left over items sold	
" " Chairs	42.30	at cost:	
" " X'Mas suit	20.00	Wine	\$18.50
Wine	141.85	Soft drinks	12.93
Biriani	288.75	Eats	6.95
Ice Cream	29.80		<u>38.38</u>
Soft Drinks	56.03		
Gifts & Decorations	128.43		
Plastic cups	15.20		
Transport	18.00		
Printing tickets	13.00		
Incidentals: Party Ice, X'Mas tree, lollies etc.	32.07		
Net Profit	86.95		
	<u>1,058.38</u>		<u>1,058.38</u>

25th January, 1977

Dear Sir,

EXHIBIT 3

I have pleasure in inviting you to attend a general meeting to be held on Sunday, 27th February, 1977, at Concord Memorial Hall, Cnr Major's Bay Road and Davidson Avenue, Central Concord, at 6 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the formation of an Association and elect a committee which will cater for the social activities of the Goan community.

A statement of the accounts for the dance held on 26th December, 1976, will be circulated at the meeting.

Kindly show your support by attending this meeting.

Yours faithfully,

A. Coutinho

63 Hannam Street,

GOAN OVERSEAS ASSOCIATION (M.S.W.)

EXHIBIT 4

Dear Mr. Mascarenhas,

At the General Meeting of Goans held in the Concord Memorial Hall, Cnr Major's Bay Road and Davidson Avenue, Central Concord, on Sunday 27th February, 1977, at 6.55 p.m., it was decided to form an Association to be named GOAN OVERSEAS ASSOCIATION (M.S.W.).

It was resolved that the objects of the Association be to promote and foster social, educational, cultural and sporting activities.

The following office bearers were declared elected: TEL:

President	Mr. Tony Machado	252-87
Gen. Secretary	" Alvito Coutinho	529-73
Treasurer	" George Peres Da Costa	357-21
Social Secretary	" Franco Pereira	801-1
Members (5)	Miss Eva Fernandes	266-1
	Miss Pessa George	797-61
	Mr. John Sequeira	645-23
	" Imre Gomes	231-14
	" Alvito Peres Da Costa	221-21

Membership fee is \$5.00 per family and \$3.00 single per year. All Goans and wellwishers are invited to become members and for this purpose an application form is appended below.

Our first social function will be held at the above Hall on 16th April, as detailed by the Social Secretary's attached programme. We call upon you to support this occasion and make it a success.

Yours sincerely,



A. Coutinho

Hon. Gen. Secretary Page 5 of 1